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# HE SUFFERED

OR

## HUMAN SUFFERING

INTERPRETED BY JESUS CHRIST



SIX MEDITATIONS FOR HOLY WEEK

BY

WILFRED MONOD



TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

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THOMAS WHITTAKER

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## PREFACE.

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THE meditations in this collection were spoken as the result of a conversation with one who was ill—body and soul.

Himself plunged in sorrow, the pastor wished, for the benefit of his people, to sound the depths of the mystery of affliction; but no one must expect a philosophical study or even a biblical exposition of the function of suffering in our lives. Drawn solely from the contemplation of Jesus Christ, and written with adoring love, these pages are simply a testimony offered to the Man of Sorrows. They have no other aim.

There is no question of an author ad-

dressing himself to his readers, but of a brother addressing himself to brothers, and saying to them, "If you suffer, love Him who has suffered; for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."



## INTRODUCTION.

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I AM very glad to have the privilege of putting my name under the introduction to this most excellent translation of a very valuable book. To any one who reads it, the introduction will seem most needless; but I am glad to be associated with Mrs. Perkins in her labor of love, and glad to feel, with her, that these meditations upon suffering must be helpful to those who are called upon to bear pain and sorrow, finding strength to do it in "their fellowship with the sufferings" of our dear Lord.

WM. CROSWELL DOANE,  
*Bishop of Albany.*

ALBANY, February 1, 1896.



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## MONDAY.

### INEVITABLE SUFFERING.

“Jesus suffered.”—HEB. XIII. 12.

#### I.

THERE are problems that certain intelligences can never grasp; there are sentiments that certain hearts can never feel; but there is one subject, alas! which awakes in the depths of every soul an instant echo, and this is—suffering. Explorers tell us that, in plowing the ocean from pole to pole, they have never found a sea whose wave could quench their thirst. This water, always, everywhere, whether drawn from the abyss or found in the hollow of a shell, betrays the presence of an invisible

agent mysteriously blended with the unfathomable mass of the liquid element, and communicating to the smallest drop its own wild and bitter savor.

In that other ocean that we call humanity, suffering is what the salt is to the sea. Wander over the earth in all directions; leave Europe, blackened by the smoke of its workshops and the powder of its battle-fields; fly to the silence and the light of the East; listen to the harmonious voice of the blue waves around the coral islands of Polynesia; traverse the burning plains of Africa or the frozen vastness of the North; seek, ask, observe—it is suffering that you will find; it is suffering that will answer you; it is suffering that will erect itself everywhere, implacable, against your horizon.

Like the mysterious column that went with the Israelites across the desert, human suffering will go with you in your journey step by step; when the sky is clear it is a pillar of cloud, a misty veil before the sun; in the darkness it is a pillar of fire, a blaz-

ing torch to chase the slumber from your eyes and banish the healing shades of night. In all latitudes, and under all conditions, man weeps. He weeps under the glowing flowers and splendid foliage of the tropic forest, as well as in the deadly dust that poisons the miners' breath; he weeps in ball-rooms and in prison-cells; in the glittering palaces among the throng of those who thirst for pleasure, as well as in the melancholy hospitals among the sighs of those who thirst for death. Everywhere man weeps: Whether he bends over a cradle with a smiling face, or over a coffin with despair in his heart, his brow bears the stigmata of suffering past or the prophetic signs of suffering to come.

I perceive, my brothers, behind your sufferings the sufferings of this present humanity, and behind these the sufferings of past humanity, since the present generation is more closely bound to the generations that precede it than the branch to the tree, or the hand to the arm which bears it. In reascending the dim pathways of the vanished

centuries, I encounter the pale face of Pascal, and I listen to his description of our life: "Imagine a crowd of fettered men condemned to death. Day by day some of their number fall before their eyes; they foresee their own destiny; they gaze at one another with hopeless sadness, and await their turn. This is a picture of the life of man." What, Pascal! is this thy thought of life? Is there no brighter one? And Pascal continues: "The last act is always tragic, however fine the comedy in all the rest. The earth is thrown over us, and all is done forever." This was one view of human destiny two centuries ago; but was it thus six centuries ago, twelve centuries ago?

If we plunge into the distant past, can we ever win from mortal lips the assertion of a universal bliss that we have lost? Alas! in the most ancient documents is the echo of a universal sigh. We learn from history that the philosopher Hegesias taught the vanity of life so well that his disciples rushed to suicide, and he was



obliged to close his school. Three hundred years before this tragic teaching, Buddha had already founded that religion of despair which finds its supreme good in annihilation, and its supreme misery in the return to this life, after death. And many centuries before Buddha the inscriptions of the great monarchs of Asia speak of bloody wars and tortured victims. Ah, what triumphs for sorrow! As we penetrate further and further into the past history of our race, we enter into the mystery of prehistoric times. There are no more books, no more inscriptions; if this pathetic silence had a voice, would it speak to us of happiness? Stoop down and look at this human skull: the teeth of some fierce beast have left their marks upon these bones, bleaching for centuries. Do you need other documents? One shrinks from the task of trying to describe the sufferings of primitive man, exposed without defense to cold, to hunger, to sickness, and to a thousand formidable troubles.

This, my brothers, is the interminable,

wretched procession that moves along before my eyes. It begins in the primeval forests, where our ancestors fought with wild beasts for their lives; it is swelled every year by every human being that is born into the world. You yourselves belong to this funeral-train, and as I gaze profoundly into your eyes I see revived in them the extinguished gaze of vanished generations. And what if, groping in the awful darkness that hides the roots of the human race, our imaginations should evoke the mute sufferings of the living creatures that preceded man upon our globe? And why should we not? The edifice of humanity is built upon the foundation of the animal existence, and we feel ourselves intimately bound to our unconscious precursors. Even before the appearance of the human race, blood flowed upon the earth and reddened unknown seas, the theater of hateful combats. Then, as now, "life was an endless chase, where creatures, now the hunter and now the hunted, fought over the fragments of a horrid quarry." Then,

as now, one might have said with the poet :

“Aveugle exécuteur d'un mal obligatoire,  
Chaque vivant promène écrit sur sa machoire,  
L'arret de mort d'un autre, exigé par sa faim.”

Thus everything that lives is plunged in sorrow. There has been suffering, and there still is suffering, in the depths of ocean and beyond the clouds. Why should it then surprise us, if suffering humanity has sometimes wandered from the way? if there have been instants when the universal letting loose of anguish has seemed cruel and senseless irony, an unanswerable proof that our world rolls in space at random, without an aim and without a God? Hear this cry of despair :

“Les ondes et les cieux autour de leur victime,  
Luttent d'acharnement, de bruit, d'obscurité;  
En proie à ces conflits, mon vaisseau sur l'abîme,  
Court sans boussole, et dématé. . . .

“Jouet de l'ouragan qui l'emporte et le mène,  
Encombré de trésors et d'agrés submergés,  
Ce navire perdu, mais c'est le nef humaine,  
Et nous sommes les naufragés.

“ L'équipage affolé manœuvre en vain dans l'ombre ;  
L'Épouvante est à bord, le desespoir, le deuil ;  
Assise au gouvernail, la Fatalité sombre  
Le dirige vers un écueil. . . .

“ Ah! c'est un cri sacré que tout cri d'agonie ;  
Il proteste, il accuse au moment d'expirer.  
Eh! bien ce cri d'angoisse et d'horreur infinie,  
Je l'ai jeté ; je puis sombrer!”

*(Literal Translation.)*

“ Around their victim, the skies and the clouds struggle with rage and tumult and darkness. Of this conflict, my vessel is the prey ; flying over the abyss, unmasted and without a guide.

“ It is the sport of the hurricane that drives it and bears it on, encumbered with its treasures and its tangled, half-drowned sails. And this doomed ship! Why, 'tis the vessel of the human race, and we the shipwrecked ones!

“ The maddened crew strive hopeless in the dark ; Horror is on board, and Despair and Weeping, and at the helm sits grim Fate and drives it on a rock!

“ Ah! every cry of anguish is a sacred cry. Before it dies it accuses, it protests. Well! do you know? This cry of anguish and of infinite despair is mine! Now, I may drown!”

## II.

But I have heard a cry, my brothers, that silences this other one, full of revolt and blasphemy, a cry that dominates the

clamor and sighing of all humanity, that puts an end to all the sufferings of those who hear it; I mean the cry of the dying Jesus. "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost."

Have you heard this cry? Do you wish to hear it to-day? Fall on your knees humbly, in the silence, and you will hear this great cry. When you have heard it, your grief will be transfigured. Why? Because you will understand for the first time that Jesus suffered. Jesus suffered.

I am not speaking just now of the significance of the sufferings of Christ; I do not tell you that Jesus suffered for *you*; I simply say, "Jesus suffered." I do not even speak of the way in which Jesus bore His sufferings; I do not bid you suffer as Jesus did; I simply say, "Jesus suffered." I beg you to consider the simple fact, without a comment, the fact in all its nakedness, in its mysterious horror, the fact that Jesus suffered. Fix your attention on this brief announcement; concentrate on these two words all the powers of your imagina-

tion, all the energies of your heart. In the silence of the night, when you cannot rest, in the tumult of the day, when you dare not weep, say to yourself often in your inmost soul, "Jesus suffered." And your grief will be transfigured.

But you ask me, How? Alas! do you not feel it? If you do not feel it, what shall I say to make you understand? But first, do you forget who Jesus was? "The Word was made flesh," writes St. John, "and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Listen to the Apostle Paul: "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is "the image of the invisible God. All things were created by Him, and for Him." Listen to Christ Himself: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. I and My Father are one. No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Listen to God: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Do you under-

stand? Jesus was the Son of God; and this unique, admirable, glorious being, before whom every knee in heaven bows, and every knee will bow on earth, this Son of God, is the same Jesus that "cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." Jesus, yes Jesus, suffered. If then the Son of God has suffered, who among us will presume to find in his own sufferings an occasion for a murmur, or a reason for a doubt?

What! if I suffer, God forgets me? if I suffer, Providence is but a name? if I suffer, there is no God? Poor fool! If thy arguments were true, the agony of Jesus Christ destroyed the very idea of God in the world. In the hours of darkness and fainting, when the power, the wisdom, and the love of God have disappeared from thy horizon like extinguished stars, look at the cross, and the simple thought that Jesus suffered will rekindle in thy heaven those vanished lights. But this is not all. If Jesus was the Son of God, He was also the Son of man, the type of true humanity,

the perfect and conclusive realization of the human ideal, the immaculate blossom of a tree that has flowered but once. Jesus extracted from life all that a human creature might; He respected all the laws of nature, He accomplished all the will of God.

In every direction He urged all the powers of His soul to the extreme limit of harmonious development. The radiance of His spotless holiness by turns affrighted His disciples, and transported them with love; it exasperated His enemies, chased away devils, and evoked in benediction the unknown voice of the thrice-holy God from the desolate silence of the heavens. "Who among you will convince Me of sin?" said He to those who hated Him; and not one of them dared to answer. Now this unique and wonderful being, the crown and glory of humanity, the everlasting sovereign of the human race, this Son of man, is the same Jesus who cried with a loud voice as He expired. Jesus, yes Jesus, suffered. If then the Son of man has suffered, who



among us will dare to discover in his own sorrow an occasion for a murmur, or a reason for a doubt?

What! I rebel against sorrow? I desire to banish it from my life as something unjust or at least unnatural?

When the waves of adversity, breaking down the weak barriers of an ephemeral happiness, rushed in upon my life, sweeping away the edifice of my delight, I wrung my hands in despair and said: "There is nothing left for me but death. My life is a failure; what should not have been, has been. Born to fresh air and clear skies, I have fallen into a gulf of misery; my fate is a problem, an incomprehensible exception to the laws of mercy and justice that rule the universe." My brothers, one glance at the cross will put an end to all these murmurs. If the ideal Man has suffered, it is because suffering here below is part of human destiny. If the natural life of a perfect being was not beyond sorrow, why should sorrow be out of place in the imperfect lives of sinners such as we?

Even if we were holy, like Jesus Christ Himself, our suffering would not be an argument against the love and faithfulness of God. How much more natural is sorrow when it falls on sinful men!

If our misfortunes forced us to believe that Providence was an illusion and our heavenly Father but a dream, if they proved without a doubt that life was an evil thing and not worth living, then believe me, the nails that transpierced Jesus would have arraigned this imaginary Deity in the depths of an empty heaven; the anguish of the Nazarene would have been the death of the Eternal One, and on the hill of Golgotha Jesus would have set up atheism.

Ah, away with these blasphemies! In the hours of darkness and despair, when the power, the wisdom, and the love of God have disappeared from our horizon like extinguished stars, when earth seems empty and our human pilgrimage an aimless folly, let us look—let us look at Calvary; and at the thought that Jesus suffered, those vanished lights will reilluminate

our heaven. So then, my brothers, since the Son of God has suffered, suffering can never be a proof that God has abandoned us. Since the Son of man has suffered, suffering can never be a proof that life has given way beneath our feet, or that our existence has been a failure. In a word, because Jesus suffered, sorrow can never take away our faith in God, nor even our faith in life. Nay, far from enfeebling, sorrow should strengthen us, since Jesus suffered. Truly if Christ was acquainted with grief, if He who said "I am the light of the world" has impressed Himself upon the ages as the Man of Sorrows, those resemble Jesus most who suffer most. Physical suffering or moral suffering, all kinds of suffering, at once imprint upon our destiny a trait of likeness to the human destiny of the Holy and the Just One.

You who groan beneath the weight of physical suffering, lift up your heads; Jesus suffered. You whose heart is torn, you who weep, courage! Jesus suffered.

You who suffer from the ingratitude, the injustice, the cruelty of men, do not despair; look unto Him who suffered unjustly. And you who from out the dark waves where the tempest has flung you, cry vainly to unlistening skies, you who turn to God, and He does not take your extended hand—do not forget Him who cried and had no answer, do not forget that Jesus suffered.

Yes, the more incomprehensible your suffering, the more iniquitous, the more it accuses men who have betrayed you and God who has forsaken you, by so much the more does it resemble the suffering of Jesus, and thus a ray of His glory falls upon your brow. To suffer is not to sin, since Jesus suffered. To suffer is not to fall, since Jesus suffered. What honor, what consolation, for those who suffer! Ah, let me not be deprived of that likeness to Him! I do not wish that the same earth that wounded His sacred feet should offer mine only a carpet of flowers. I do not wish that the same sky that crushed

Him under its darkness in His agony should always shine upon me with its radiant splendor. I do not wish that the same life that led Him to anguish should lead me to pleasure, nor that the God who abandoned Him should shut me out of Calvary. They say that suffering is unnatural; the thing that is unnatural in the lot of humanity is to escape suffering, since Jesus suffered.

## III.

“Jesus suffered.”

Why does this thought uplift instead of casting down, and encourage instead of terrifying? For truly when we evoked just now the mournful vision of human suffering, when behind the suffering of our present humanity we saw redden in the distance like a bloody sea the forgotten suffering of vanished generations, and when behind the waves of this vast ocean we discerned, through the mist of prehistoric ages, shores white with bones of animals who suffered and died silently, before man.

suffered, before man existed; when this frightful picture of universal anguish unrolled before our astounded eyes, we shuddered, and a strange, vague despair oppressed our unwilling hearts; we felt that we could bear no more. And now see! A cross rears itself between heaven and earth; a living human creature hangs nailed upon it; he is thirsty, he prays, he groans, he dies, giving a loud cry, and we learn that this dishonored corpse was the body of the Son of God.

How is it that that sight, full of mystery and horror, instead of filling up the measure of our anguish, reassures us, gives us comfort, and reconciles us with life? Instead of saying, "All is lost since Jesus suffered," we say, "Nothing is lost since Jesus suffered." Whence comes such consolation in the presence of such grief? Whence is it that from the height of a cross, words of peace and courage have come down to us through nineteen centuries? How is it that we have gained such strength from meditation on these two

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cruel words that seem so sweet to us—  
“Jesus suffered”?

Let us not turn away our gaze. “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” and the answer will be given us.

## TUESDAY.

### ENDURABLE SUFFERING.

“ For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.”—HEB. II. 18.

#### I.

OUR text does not limit itself to asserting that Jesus suffered. It says that Jesus was tempted by suffering. In certain versions we find in the place of the word “ tried ” the word “ tempted.” But Calvin, who translates it in this way, gives the following explanation: “ Temptation signifies nothing more than experience, proof, or trial.” Undoubtedly we gain a strange courage from the simple fact that Jesus was acquainted with grief. Even if we knew none of the circumstances of His afflictions, the simple thought that He has



suffered would sustain us in our anguish ; but how precious it is to us to know it better, and to learn how Jesus suffered !

Suffering did not slip away from him like water upon marble. He struggled with it, and the final victory was dearly bought. "Like unto us in all things," Christ did not resemble those heroes of a pagan mythology who were vulnerable only in the heel. Every time that He was struck all the blows wounded Him. But it is not the physical suffering of Jesus that occupies us to-day. And yet what a pattern He has left to those whose trials are in the body ! Nor will we pause to tell what Jesus suffered as a brother, as a friend, or as a patriot, or that He often wept for sadness. And what an example He has left to those whose griefs are of the heart ! But we will draw near these mysterious sufferings that assailed Him, in the last hours of His agony, with adoring reverence, and we shall show that Jesus in that night of anguish was tested in His faith.

It is dark, it is cold. Exhausted, betrayed, outraged, the Holy and the Just One resists alone the combined assaults of all the powers of darkness. For this supreme struggle, Satan has assembled beneath his banner unlooked-for allies. He urges to the combat the chosen interpreters of the will of God; against the Just One he unchains human justice, against the Holy One the holy nation.

“O Christ, it would be too easy a part for Thee if Thou couldest die a martyr, struck down in some distant wood by the dagger of the assassin. Thou shalt not have this easy satisfaction; Thou shalt not be the victim of an ambush. Thou shalt be judged in due form; Thou shalt be condemned according to the rules; Thou shalt be crucified legally. Behold Pilate, who ascends the judgment-seat, grave and calm. Dost Thou hear the cries that greet him? Accusations multiply against Thee. Those who speak are not the ungodly, O Christ. They are the descendants of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, disciples of Moses, jealous worship-

ers of Jehovah, who uphold on earth the worship of the true God. He who directs them is not an atheist; dost Thou not see upon him the priestly robes? He has rent them in horror at Thy blasphemies. And all the priests around him, moved with sacred indignation, have decided that Thou *deservest* death. O Christ, Thou wilt be punished in the name of justice, chastised in the name of religion. The crowd itself—the untamed crowd which has its hours of quick revolt against all mischievous authority, which sets aside even high-placed verdicts which scandalize the conscience of the people, and crowns the brow of persecuted innocence—the multitude itself, O Christ, gives up Thy cause. The multitude, which can see clear at times, and which has followed Thee step by step through Thy ministry—the multitude cares no more for Thy fate, or rather suddenly it manifests its sovereign, irresistible will; it finds a voice to cry with one accord, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’ *Vox populi, vox Dei.*

“O Christ, Thou turnest away Thy head, Thou searchest for one glance of pity. Take care; perhaps if Thine should meet the eyes of John Thou wouldest read there the shame and grief of another denial. For Peter denied Thee with oaths and curses. In the person of Thy apostles, the infant church denied Thee. It was an apostle who delivered Thee to Thy enemies, and the eleven others forsook Thee and fled. Only two came back again—one to declare openly that he never knew Thee, and the other to emphasize by his silence the false witness and the insults heaped upon Thee. And now, O Christ, art Thou satisfied? Art Thou convinced of Thy folly? Why dost Thou not humiliate Thyself? Three worlds have joined to destroy Thee—the pagan world led by Pilate, the Hebrew world led by Caiaphas, the Christian world led by Judas. The multitude that follows them cries out unweariedly, ‘Away with Him! away with Him! Crucify Him!’

“Come, what art Thou waiting for? Take up Thy cross and climb to Calvary.

Now Thou art nailed upon the cursed tree. Thou must die. What an ending to Thy work! O Christ, hast Thou counted the sufferings which Thou hast let loose upon the earth? Hast Thou dried the tears of those women of Bethlehem whose little children were slaughtered because of Thee? Didst Thou prevent one of Thy apostles from destroying himself? Is this the influence of Thy example, Thy words, Thy prayers, upon the heart of one who had lived two years in Thy intimacy? O Christ, art Thou sure that Thou art the Son of God?"

And the dying Christ shuddered, for He recognized the voice of Satan, the voice that said to Him in the desert, "If Thou be the Son of God, throw Thyself down," and which now cries with a sneer, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."

And the priests take up the chorus: "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God."

It was then that the Christ, exhausted, forsaken by all the earth, with one supreme effort lifted up to the darkened heavens His heart and His weary eyes. He called upon His Father for help; and it was then that God Himself veiled His face from the sufferer, whose life was in His look. It was too much. Jesus bowed His head and went down alone into the solitude of death. This was the test to which the faith of Jesus was submitted. These were the combats from which it came forth victorious, sending out into the darkness the heroic affirmation, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

This was the attitude of Jesus Christ in suffering, and after that what height is inaccessible to us? That which human nature has endured in Christ it can certainly endure in any one of us, for who will ever face an agony like His? Christ has shown us the limits of human nature, He has revealed its capabilities; henceforth its powers are proved, and we know that this diamond can resist the heat of any furnace.

O Christ, we bless Thee for Thy example, and that by the sight alone of Thy sufferings Thou art able to succor them that are tempted, in that Thou Thyself hast "suffered being tempted."

## II.

But in the combat with suffering, is it only the example of Christ which gives us the victory? This Jesus whose sufferings we have looked upon as those of an historical personage is living at this hour; this Jesus who belongs to the past belongs to the present also. This is the thought that illuminates the declaration of our text, and desolate humanity needs this assurance to snatch it from bitter and crushing solitude. Our planet, as it bears us on, wanders across space like an audacious skiff. While the sun shines, and the sounds of human labor fill the air, as long as the rounded dome of heaven seems to shut us in beneath its blue vault, we feel that we are many, and that we are at home. But when the night has come, or, rather (for

the night is always here; it is the sun that hides it from us), when the day has disappeared, when the brilliant curtain is torn away which hid the truth, then our unobstructed glance wings its way to the extremest confines of the universe; then in the depths of unmeasured immensity our startled eyes find other worlds, whole fleets of suns sailing over space, their fiery sails swelled by the breath of God. Where go these silent stars? And have these mighty vessels any crew? Does peace reign among these shining spheres? Once speaking to a wandering comet, a poet cried:

“ N’as tu vu comme ici que douleur  
Toi qui vogues au large en cette mer sans rives,  
Sur ta route aussi loin que ton regard atteint,  
N’as tu pas vu comme ici que douleur et miseres?  
Dans ces mondes épars, dis! avons nous des frères?  
T’ont ils charge pour nous de leur salut lointain? ”

*(Literal Translation.)*

“ Thou who sailest at thy will across this shoreless sea; hast thou, as far as thy glance reacheth, seen only sorrow and misery, as it is with us? Speak! Have we brothers in those scattered worlds? Have they charged thee with their far-off greeting for us? ”



But the mute shining of the stars is the sole answer to this pathetic question; and in the night our troubled thoughts still ask themselves if the pale starlight is a signal of alarm, a bonfire, or only the cold gleam of some useless and ancient fire. Ah, no! it is not our *minds* that are perplexed, it is our *hearts* that yearn. Without a compass and without a chart, flung forth on the ocean of space, we cling to our planet as if it were a spar, and we search through the universe, anxious, terrified, forlorn, seeking in these empty spaces not help—we do not hope for help—but for the pale outline of some vessel in distress, some comrade in misfortune.

For in truth our loneliness appalls us; faith in a “blessed potentate” does not suffice us. Once, when certain miners, surprised by an inundation, trembling with cold, took refuge among the shadows of a cave without an outlet, they sustained their failing courage by crying out aloud through the darkness, each in turn. Through the slow hours of their long agony, unable to

touch or to see one another, they struggled with despair because they suffered together, because each one knew that his own anguish was shared by the heart of a comrade. It is thus in the shadows through which our world revolves: our humanity, which weeps and bleeds, also burns to know if its sorrow is unique, if in the infinite universe there have flowed no other tears, and if the abysses of eternity have drunk no other than the blood of man. But the universe overwhelms us by its implacable silence and its unchangeable serenity. This is the picture of human suffering separated from a faith in a glorified Saviour. But, happily, we know that He lives and reigns; He rescues our race by the sole fact that our sufferings find a faithful echo in the depths of those skies that seemed impassable, by the sole fact that the Son of God, King of the universe, bears still upon His brow the mark of thorns. It is toward the Man of Golgotha that the tide of eternity draws the innumerable suns that furrow the night of space. Christ shines

in the center of all things ; worlds gravitate toward Him ; stars, like souls, rush to Him from the ends of the horizon ; and the immense chorus of creation groups itself around the eternal Prince of supreme harmony. But on the hands of the Son of God, stretched out to bless us, are the marks of the nails that pierced them.

Ah, truly humanity is not forsaken in its sufferings ! What matters it if the mysterious firmament keeps its silent serenity ? Humanity knows henceforth that a heart beats in the depths of immensity ; it knows that it is understood and loved ; it knows that at the center of the universe reigns He who died on Calvary, and that the golden furrow of the stars reaches to the foot of the cross ; it knows that the Son of God, living and reigning, "is able to succor them that are tempted."

### III.

In the meantime, for the struggle against suffering Jesus offers us still other weapons. Even though fortified by the example of

His death and strengthened by the reality of His glorification, we should still be too weak. Jesus wishes to give Himself to those who suffer. Our text declares that if the sorrows of Christ are a support for us in our duel with affliction, they are also a support for the Son of God in the succor that He wishes to bring us in the press of battle. He can and He will bring it. If He has suffered, He suffers still. "Jesus is in agony to the end of the world." He suffers every day when the selfishness and unbelief of man "crucify Him afresh." He suffers in the sufferings of the church, "which is His body." But if He suffers perpetually by the wounds that are inflicted upon Him, He desires to suffer in the persons of all those who suffer; He desires to dwell in them by His Holy Spirit.

"It is not I who live," writes St. Paul, "but Christ liveth in me." "This is a great mystery," he writes further. "But God has made known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery; namely, Christ in you, the hope of glory." "That Christ

may dwell in your hearts by faith," and then you will "be more than conquerors through Him that loved us." "As for me," adds Paul, "the power of Christ is made perfect in my weakness," and "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

"I can do all things"—this is the device of the Christian who has a glimpse into this mystery of love and life. I can do all things against suffering, for Jesus Christ has triumphed over suffering. When trial advances against the Christian, it sees the face of Him who conquered it upon the cross. Let temptation come! Jesus will put His old enemy to flight. Let doubt assail us! Jesus will put to flight His ancient adversary. Sorrow itself, under all its forms, as soon as it beholds its conqueror, falls prostrate at His sacred feet.

Ah! those alone who have entered into the ineffable communion of Christ can understand these great truths. They alone can grasp the whole extent of the magnificent affirmation of the text, "For in that

He Himself hath suffered being tempted,  
He is able to succor them that are  
tempted." But no one need despair;  
Christ is the supreme refuge, the final consolation in every humble, trusting sorrow.  
"Come unto Me, all ye who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."  
And "Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

## WEDNESDAY.

### USEFUL SUFFERING.

“ Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.”—HEB. v. 8.

IN our first two meditations we sought for weapons against sorrow. But is it true that we must look upon it as an enemy? To-day we will consider the usefulness of sorrow. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, and we will comprehend what no argument can teach us. It is not a paradox to say that sorrow is useful. Mourning humanity has not perfect confidence in those cruel comforters who cry out against suffering, and threaten Heaven. When Job's wife in her distraction exclaims, “ Curse God and die!” Job answers her, “ Thou speakest like one of the foolish women.” With Job,

humanity knows well that sorrow is not its worst enemy, and through the voice of its poets it confesses the benefits of trial:

“ L’homme est un apprenti, la douleur est son maître,  
Et nul ne se connaît, tant qu’il n’a pas souffert.”

“ Man is an apprentice, and sorrow is his master ;  
he cannot know himself until he has suffered.”

And it recognizes its own convictions in spite of itself in this strange assertion of a contemporary philosopher: “Sorrow is a condiment without which the world would grow insipid. This is not the expression of exalted piety ; it is the language of common sense.” A secret instinct warns us that we must acknowledge the blessedness of sorrow. A Christian thinker has said: “Perhaps to suffer, is only to live more deeply. Would it be possible for all the dignity of our nature to reveal itself without suffering?” We can read the answer to this melancholy and sublime question on the bleeding brow of Jesus. We could not guess the august greatness of human nature without Gethsemane and



Golgotha. O Christ, Thou hast been "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

## I.

But here my thoughts are troubled, and language fails me. I was speaking of dignity, of greatness, of exaltation; I was seeking a striking example of triumph, and, behold, the words that fall from my lips seem to escape the meaning I would give them. I would speak of domination, and they express obedience; of royalty, and they express ignominy. What is this mystery? Why must the eye that waits the coming sun see the pale shadow of a cross, upon those shining heights lit by the glow of dawn? Am I deceived? Am I the sport of an hallucination?

Far from that, my brothers; it is the reality that confounds our shallow minds. It combines in one Person the attributes of divinity with the stamp of servitude. Mighty and weak, Prince and slave, Jesus was great with a supreme greatness be-

cause He abased Himself to a supreme abasement. "He became *obedient*." Alas, how strangely the word sounds in the ears of a generation that has forgotten the meaning of it! Obedience has lost its place in our conception of life. Like the dove that wandered solitary over the waters of the deluge without finding a branch on which to set her foot, obedience—virtue in contempt—finds no refuge in our modern society. The banner of duty has been relegated to the dust-heap; the declaration of the rights of man is the only standard of humanity to-day. It is true that the equality men dream of is not yet established. It is true that the servant obeys his master, the soldier obeys his officer; but such obedience is regarded as a last resource, as a necessary evil to which they are obliged to bow, but which they murmur at in secret. Who would consider submission as a privilege? "Liberty! liberty!" is the watchword of the crowd. The whole world is full of this immense outcry, "Liberty! liberty!" Among the

silent mountains the echo awakes it from the depths of the precipice, and the evening wind which rushes over cities bears away the same cry, and repeats it all the night over the lonely ocean. O man, claim thy liberty; ask it from God on thy knees, demand it of those who govern thee face to face, claim it in order to obey the better; for obedience is such a noble thing that only a free being can obey. Without liberty, obedience is impossible. The reed that bows beneath the wind does not obey—it bends; the horse, trembling, and white with foam, forced by the spur to go forward in a certain path, does not obey—he submits. Obedience is the prerogative of man. He only can obey, for he alone has a will that can submit itself freely, and a heart that can love him who commands him.

Why has God given this magnificent gift to man? Why has He said to him, “I give thee authority to obey”? Because God loves man, and means him to be holy, to be set free from sin, which is selfishness, and to come into possession of true

manhood, which conquers itself by submission to God. The will of God is like a rope thrown to us as we struggle among the untamed waves. To remain "independent" is to repulse all succor, all salvation; it is to wander without a compass and without a chart through the fury of the storm. To obey is to seize the rope, to face the blast, to brave the storm, to advance against the confederate waves, to let one's self be irresistibly drawn toward the invisible harbor where our heavenly Father awaits us. Obedience is duty under all its forms. Obedience is faith and resignation. Obedience has for its watchword, "May Thy will be done;" which means, "I will fulfil it when I am strong; I will accept it when I am weak." And therefore Vinet could write with truth, "It is obedience which gives dignity to human life. Enthusiasm, sacrifice, love, all draw their greatest beauty from obedience." Truly obedience is above the reach of cowards, and of those "stout-hearted who are free from righteousness." Few brows

are worthy of that crown; it is often refused to genius; and if the name of Jesus is "above every name that can be named," it is because the obedience of Jesus is above all obedience that can be imagined: "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Jesus was great because He was obedient, and it was in suffering that this singular greatness was manifested in all its splendor. It is through the darkness that we see the stars, and this is the mission of sorrow here below. When God wishes to illuminate a life, He says, "Let there be light," and grief appears.

Then who will dare deny the usefulness of sorrow on the earth, since it reveals all the treasures of the human soul, the priceless jewels which joy would have hidden from our eyes?

## II.

But the divine part that sorrow plays is not limited to obedience. The Holy Scriptures open other horizons to us. They tell us that if the passion of Jesus Christ

manifested His obedience in its highest form, this obedience itself was the fruit of suffering. Jesus was not only obedient, but He was obliged to learn obedience. "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." The suffering of His death irradiated His obedience; but the suffering of His life had taught it to Him. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Once more, my brothers, a mystery arises before us. Through the majesty of this noble affirmation we perceive a new problem which troubles our minds; and if we were surprised to hear just now the obedience of Christ cited as a proof of His greatness, we are again amazed to hear that Jesus had to be raised to perfection. Did not the same author declare that Jesus was "holy, guileless, and undefiled"? How then can we represent to ourselves a spiritual development in the Holy One? And

how did Jesus learn obedience? Either one is holy, or unholy. Doubtless; but the idea of an immaculate holiness does not exclude the idea of progress and development. The plant which has begun to grow has not begun to bloom, but yet as germ it may be perfect. The bud is not the flower, but as a bud it may be perfect. The infant smiling in its cradle may be a perfect child, but that does not prevent its growth into a youth, who in his turn hopes to develop into a complete maturity. Thus Jesus grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," through all the years of His youth; thus He continued to grow to the end of His life, strengthened in holiness by each new victory. A royal eagle mounting toward the sky soars triumphantly above the noise and dust of earth; yet each stroke of his mighty pinions brings him nearer to the zenith. The sacred author would have merely expressed an obvious truth, if he had limited himself to the assurance that Jesus had never ceased to learn and grow, in all the course

of His career; for the real difficulty does not lie in the fact that the Son of God developed constantly. The practical problem whose solution is of such infinite importance to us is this: in what sense did the sufferings of Jesus contribute to His development? What relation is there between the sufferings of the Saviour and His establishment in obedience? When it is said that Christ learned obedience by the things that He suffered, is it not implied that His will naturally revolted against suffering, and that His acceptance of the trial was a voluntary act of submission? But if we say that His will resisted suffering, is it not implied that His will was separated from the will of God? Ah, how well one can understand the feeling of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he wrote our text as if he were affrighted at his own boldness: "Though He was a Son . . ."! That is to say, however incredible it may seem, though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.

My brothers, it is not an idle curiosity



that urges us to seek for the solution of this problem ; we need weapons with which to triumph over suffering. We wish to believe that suffering is useful, and, above all, we thirst to acknowledge once more the Man of Sorrows as our most perfect model and our most powerful support. We need to see Him descend, pale and solitary, into the darkness of sorrow, to come forth again sanctified, victorious like the divers who rise up from the deep bearing precious pearls.

O Christ, Thou who hast learned obedience, Thou knowest in what spirit I search into this mystery ; Thou knowest in what spirit these before me listen. We prostrate ourselves at Thy feet, humble, fervent, adoring.

Let us approach this mystery and follow Jesus to the desert where He was tempted, and to the garden where He was taken prisoner. The scene in the desert opens His ministry, that in the garden closes it. Alone during the first crisis, and forsaken during the second, He came forth each time

from this duel without witnesses, triumphant; that is to say, obedient. The struggle in the desert ended with these words: "Thou shalt serve God alone;" and the anguish of Gethsemane ended with these: "Not My will, but Thine, be done." We discover, therefore, in both crises an apparent conflict between the will of the Son and the will of the Father. On both occasions Jesus is troubled and shrinks back trembling at the entrance of a solitary path whose end is lost in dreadful darkness. After both agonies the victory remains with God. The victory? But what is this? Did the Son wish what the Father did not wish? No, no; but, in the horror of an indescribable hesitation, the Son had ceased to see what was the will of the Father. Seeking to glorify the Father, He asked Himself, in the grasp of a tragic indecision, if the Father really willed that His glory should be trampled underfoot in the person of His Son; and the greatness of His love for His Father made the greatness of His anguish.

“He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” How does the affirmation of the text apply to the decisive moment of the temptation? In the desert, what was it that rendered submission difficult to Jesus; or, rather, what was the reason that prevented Him from discerning clearly the will of the Father? Had He not at His baptism, only a few days before, received the solemn witness that He was the Son of God? Yes, my brothers, and the consciousness of the divine Sonship was precisely the source of the sufferings of Christ at the time of the temptation. Let us recall under what form the temptation presented itself to His heart:

“If Thou art the Son of God, manifest Thyself. If Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the possessor of supernatural power; employ this miraculous energy to convince the Jewish nation of Thy heavenly origin. Let them not see Thee subject to all the needs of humanity; when Thou art hungry, command that these stones be made bread. Be invulnerable, and brave

all perils ; dazzle all men by Thy glory ; let the people run to Thee to listen to the Son of God, and at Thy triumphant chariot-wheels draw all the kingdoms of the world, conquered by Jehovah."

Does any one assert that the soul of Jesus was inaccessible to such temptations? Is not that to forget the picture set before us by the prophets of Messiah and His reign? "The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God." "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth; He shall slay the wicked with the breath of His lips." "The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be founded on the summit of the mountains, and the people shall flock unto it." These glorious prophecies had nourished the infancy, the boyhood, and the youth of Jesus, and now, in the flower of His strength and the expansion of His faith, He had received publicly from the Most High the assurance that He was the Son of God, the Messiah for centuries expected. Had not the hour

sounded? He must conquer the world for God.

And it was then that the Holy Spirit revealed to Him, in the silence of the desert, the narrow road that He must climb; the rough road whose stones are red with the blood of the prophets; the Via Dolorosa that He must tread day after day, without opening His mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter.

“Is it this, O My Father, that Thou dost expect of Me? Must I deny the mission which Thy prophets promised Me, the supreme dignity which Thou hast conferred upon Me? If I am the Son of God I cannot accept defeat and shame, for My ignominy would be the ignominy of the Eternal One.”

And the voice of the Holy Spirit answered, “Son of God, lay down Thy rights! Thou dost not understand? That matters nothing; God understands. Descend from Thy throne and go up on the cross.”

And Jesus obeyed. He who felt thrilling in Him the power that later was to still the

waves and rebuke the winds, agreed to be weak, to be hungry, to be thirsty, to be weary, to drag in the roadside dust His tired feet, for which the nails of the cross were waiting. And Jesus obeyed. He who could make the soldiers go backward and fall to the ground, He who could have called to His help with a sign twelve legions of angels, consented to hide Himself from His enemies. And Jesus obeyed. He laid down His royal mantle, His crown, and His scepter in the desert, that He might become the servant of all, that He might wash the feet of His disciples, and receive with blows and spittings another crown and another kingdom. Jesus obeyed. And when He returned to the crowd, unnoticed, but a conqueror, the heavenly hosts who had witnessed the struggle exclaimed in chorus, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

And this was true as well in the agony at Gethsemane. In the desert what rendered submission difficult to Jesus was the consciousness of His mission, His dignity,

and the assurance that He was the Son of God; at the Mount of Olives He shuddered at the nature of the sufferings before Him. In the desert He had accepted His ministry; in Gethsemane He must accept His passion. In the desert He had seen what should be His life; in Gethsemane He discovered what should be His death. What was that death? No man can tell. At the mere thought of it, hours before it came, Jesus sweat, "as it were, great drops of blood." As we enter the garden of Olives as Jesus prays, "fallen upon His face on the ground," we enter the "holy of holies." Here it befits us to put a seal upon our lips, to impose silence upon our imaginations, to close our eyes and adore. An angel was sent to strengthen Him; and when Jesus, once more master of Himself, ceased to weep, when He lifted His calm brow and walked with a firm step to the meeting with Judas, the heavenly messenger, amazed by this miracle, murmured, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

## III.

And now let us look into ourselves, my brothers. If we have seriously considered Christ, there is no need of many words. Since suffering was useful to the Son of God, can it be useless to us? It is of use to show forth what is good in us, but, above all, to give us something better. Jesus, in order to obey, had to lay down His royal prerogatives; He had to sacrifice, for the moment, His faith in Himself, and to confide Himself entirely, "though He was a Son," to the divine wisdom and mercy.

We must allow suffering to empty us of ourselves; it must take away our faith in our own knowledge, in our own power, and even in our own value. It must steep us in the sense of our weakness, leaving us trembling on the breast of the immense universe, like a little child. When we are thus broken by suffering, we are ripe for the consolation which comes from on high; then we learn obedience by learning that



we are nothing, and humbly we implore the help of God. However, as we lose confidence in ourselves, it follows that we also lose a certain confidence in life, and, feeling our weakness, life appears to us unstable, changeable, and treacherous as the waves, full of surprises and hidden catastrophes, incomprehensible, indefinable, implacably mysterious.

Therefore it was needful that Jesus in Gethsemane should accept, in order to obey, an ineffable anguish which has no name in any tongue. And when life slips away beneath our feet, obedience will be easier for us; it will be easier for us to take God's hand, and to cry out, like Peter sinking in the waves, "Lord, help, or I perish." Yes, thanks to suffering, we can attain obedience. Submission does not consist in the refusal to acknowledge suffering; we must feel it and not despise it. Jesus yearned for sympathy; and when we can no longer suffer, we can no longer imitate our Saviour, for He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

Oh, the wonders of grace! Lord, Thou hast chastised us for our profit, that we might be partakers of Thy holiness; and it was in order to bring many sons unto glory that Thou hast made "the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

## THURSDAY.

### NECESSARY SUFFERING.

“Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. . . . For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. . . . Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people, . . . suffered without the gate.”—HEB. IX. 22; X. 4; XIII. 12.

#### I.

THERE is a game in which the player invents curious figures by connecting four dots put at random on a paper; these figures are capable of almost infinite variations.

I know of four points in the great universe which history once bound together, and the picture thus obtained was found to be a cross. Here there is no possible variation; only a cross could unite in one

harmonious whole, *God, man, holiness, sin*. Other combinations have suggested themselves to the human mind, but they have always failed; a cross is the only and final solution of the problem. The astronomers gathered together in their bold constructions, separate and sometimes divergent, stars in order to group them into constellations. In the same way we can compose a shining whole with the stars of the moral heavens; we can bring together the idea of God and of man, the idea of holiness and of sin; but the constellation thus obtained will always form a cross.

“Partout le martyre est écrit;  
Une immense croix git dans notre nuit profonde;  
Et nous voyons saigner aux quatre coins du monde  
Les quatre clous de Jesus Christ.”

“Everywhere is written, Martyrdom! Extended in our dark night lies an immense cross! The four nails of it bleed from the four corners of the world!”

It was not chance that raised the cross on Calvary. It was the supreme manifestation of the mysterious forces that labor in our planet and our race.

When a tree bears, is the nature of its fruit the result of chance? Could an oak bear figs? If the oak produces acorns, it is because the acorn slept invisible in the sap of the colossus; it is because the whole oak is but the acorn in formation.

This acorn in formation, which shelters birds and men, proceeds also from an unseen acorn hidden underground, so that the whole immense oak is only the prodigious effort of an acorn to become another acorn. It is thus that the cross shows forth the hidden meaning of history, and the eternal thought which presides over the returns of revolution as over the changes of the seasons.

If history produced the cross, so did the cross produce history, and the bloody flower that bloomed on Calvary has issued from the seed whence came the centuries. As the human body, always identical with itself, survives the incessant renewing of its particles, so the cross of Christ is the unchangeable framework that incloses the changing whirlwinds of created beings.

Empires, laws, systems, revolts, and earthquakes, human generations driven like snowflakes by the wind of eternity—they have all departed, but the cross remains; it gives its ideal form to history.

History would cease to merit its name, it would become a simple tumult, if it had no exact meaning, if its moving tide had no determined end. But the cross is there! Like the shores of a river, it maintains in a single direction the fugitive current of events. What would be the meaning of the history of the world if it were not the history of redemption; if all the ages that came before Christ had not been the long and grievous preface to Golgotha; if all the ages that followed the disappearance of the Saviour have not been the development of His suffering?

The centuries seek the cross as the creeping ivy seeks its tree; they have clung to it as if it were a giant trunk. If the tree is felled, the ivy must go with it. To tear away the cross from history would not only be the effacing of one event from an unend-

ing list; it would be to suppress history itself.

The world is an enigma to which the cross has given the answer. In that thought of ancient paganism, that the world was a vast penitentiary to which, after death, souls came back to suffer the pains they merited, there was an obscure presentiment of the cross. Such a one in a former existence lived delicately; now he reappears in an animal, or even in a stone. There is much that is great in the doctrine of reincarnation; it saw dimly the expiatory character of sorrow in universal history; but it only shows us a dungeon, and in this prison tells us that God makes man suffer. The gospel shows us a cross, and this cross reveals to us that God suffered for man.

No, it was not chance that raised the cross on Calvary. Judas, why art thou in despair? Pilate, why dost thou wash thy hands to clear away the stain of innocent blood? And thou, centurion, why didst thou smite thy breast at the sight of the death of the Holy One? You have to-

gether executed the decrees of the Most High.

Bless the Lord, all His hosts; ye ministers of His, who do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all ye who have betrayed the Christ, ye who have condemned Him, ye who have tortured Him. Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.

## II.

“Jesus took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. For He shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said.” And we, my brothers, do we understand?



To believe that the sufferings of Jesus were necessary is not to see in them simply the inevitable consequences of the moral state of humanity. It is true that water hisses when a red-hot iron is plunged into it; it is true that the waves grow furious against an obstacle; it is too true that holiness in a polluted world is sure of insult, and often death.

Long before Jesus Christ, a pagan philosopher, describing the improbable appearance in this world of a perfectly holy being, led him from suffering to suffering until he expired on a cross. Do we believe in the necessity of the real sufferings of Christ only as Plato believed in those he fancied? Then we can no longer say, with Paul, "We have the mind of Christ," but, rather, "We have the mind of Plato." We cease to be Christians. We find the mind of Christ concerning His death and its necessity on every page of the Gospels: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things? . . . And

beginning from Moses and from the prophets, He interpreted unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Jesus looks backward through the past of humanity, and His eye detects across the flood of the ages the cross, coming to Him from the ends of the earth. Like the mast of a submerged vessel, urged by the tempest toward the shore, it rises and falls at the will of the waves. Each wave is a century; if it disappears for an instant, it is but to reappear, and each time guided by the breath of God. It advances straight to its aim; the birds fly before it with extended necks, designating the port by their prophetic cries; the star of the wise men is its lighthouse; and when at last it reaches land, Christ is there, the nails are ready, and a whole frenzied people crying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Why did Jesus refuse to escape from His adversaries? In order that the Scriptures might be accomplished. Why was He crucified with malefactors? That the Scriptures might be accomplished. Why did they draw lots for

His garment? That the Scriptures might be accomplished. Why did Jesus say, "I am thirsty"? That the Scriptures might be accomplished. Why did Jesus, before He gave up the ghost, raise His dying voice once more? That He might say, "It is finished." And now will any one deny that the sufferings of Christ were necessary?

Nevertheless, just here, new questions open before our attentive mind. We showed just now that one cannot believe completely in the necessity of the passion, who limits himself to the belief that it was inevitable. But if one believes that it was predicted, does he therefore believe completely in its necessity? It was necessary that the prophecies should be fulfilled; events must not give the lie to the messengers of Jehovah; but what was the foundation of these prophecies? To what profound realities did these ancient predictions correspond? In what tragic necessities did they root themselves? Listen to the words of the text: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." It is the

cry of man's conscience. It hungers and thirsts for expiation. He who knows not this torture is a deserter from humanity. Where are those wretches who do not consider themselves worthy of punishment? When we have offended a friend, we are more miserable if he pardons us than if he struck us. When we have sinned, an irresistible instinct draws us with a strange pleasure, a sort of passionate tenacity, toward some misfortune which we taste beforehand as a reparation, as a terrible relief, bitter-sweet. When remorse seizes us, we long for punishment; we greet it as one who sets us free. Then, if sorrow extends over us her black wings, we cling to them; and if her sharp beak tears our shuddering flesh, we bless her. What! is it possible! have you never longed to plunge, living, into the purifying fires of suffering? No, no; your conscience cannot be harder than that of the poor heathen who groans over his sins, imploring pardon of his vengeful divinities; who mutilates himself at their altars, and rushes away, torn and bleeding,

to fling his little child to the wild beasts. As soon as man appeared on earth, then appeared the smoke of sacrifices in the sky. It was not the Bible that said to man, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin;" it was man that said it to the Bible.

But this is what the Bible revealed to man: "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." This is the reason that Jesus suffered, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood. Do you understand now the necessity of the passion of Christ? Necessary not only because it was inevitable, nor even because it was predicted, but because it alone could quench the thirst for expiation which tormented sinful humanity. Here discussion is useless and impossible. It is enough to state the truth that for nineteen centuries, faith in the expiatory sacrifice consummated on Golgotha has set at rest the consciences of men and sanctified their wills. The fact is there, weighty, impregnable, sublime.

But can the necessity for the sufferings of Christ rest finally on a mere statement like this? We have shown earlier that one cannot explain this mysterious necessity by saying the death of Jesus was predicted. Do we explain it better if we say the death of Jesus was necessary because it is the only refuge of sinful souls? The question that arises is this: "*Why* do sinful souls find a refuge there?" Yes, why do they? When the blood of Abel cries for vengeance, it is the blood of Cain that should be shed, and not the blood of Jesus. My brothers, it is really the blood of Cain that was shed upon the cross; it was the blood of sinful humanity that flowed from the wounds of Jesus. It was the human race that was nailed upon the cursed tree, and the punishment fell on the real culprit. For if the Son of God could say, "I am one with the Father," the Son of man could say, "I am one with men—one with them, not in intention, but in reality; not only in sympathy, but in origin; not only on the earth, but already in the heavens, be-

fore my incarnation, even before creation itself." The Son of God in the glory of the Father was the living prophecy of humanity. "All things," says St. Paul, "were created by Him and for Him." It was by Him that humanity came into existence. "All things," says St. John, "were made by the Word; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The incarnation of the Son of God was the visible and transitory manifestation of His eternal union with the human race. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth was its complete summary. At once royal and miserable, it ascended Calvary in Him; it was crucified with Christ; by Him it drank the cup of the divine wrath; by Him it gave glory to God for His judgment against its iniquity; and it was pardoned humanity that cried, "It is finished." Does not St. Paul assert

that God "hath raised us up with Christ, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"? If, then, humanity triumphed with Christ, it was because it perished with Him.

Do you discern now the necessity of the passion? It is not enough to say that the sufferings of Christ were necessary to humanity; they were also necessary to Christ; for sinful humanity must suffer for itself, and humanity was in Christ. Humanity had turned away from God in the person of the first Adam, in whom the whole human family was contained; it was necessary that humanity should disavow its rebellion in the person of the second Adam, in whom the race was even more profoundly concentrated. It was on Golgotha that the great work was consummated. During His whole life Christ bore in His thoughts and on His heart the sin of the world. Mourning over the unacknowledged glory of His Father, mourning over the lost glory of His brothers, He bent lower and lower each day under the burden of evil. In



Gethsemane His brow lay in the dust. Until now, Christ had bowed under the weight of His immense compassion for humanity astray ; now He falls under the wrath of God against humanity that sins. Until then, by the ineffable power of redemptive sympathy, Christ had *made* the sin of the human race His own ; now He *accepts* it as His own. God imposes it ; God imputes it to Him ; God discerns it in Him, and prepares to sentence it in His person. God, in the horror of that silent night, cited humanity at His bar ; He summoned it ; and Christ, prostrate, heard in the depth of his consciousness a voice which answered, "*Here am I.*" God in the darkness holds forth to humanity the cup of divine judgment ; and Christ, prostrate, feels vibrate in His being the unnumbered multitude of vanished generations. The spirit of humanity suddenly awakes in Him, and it is the hand of the Christ that extends itself into the shadow to grasp the cup destined for sinners. It was done. The brow of the Son of man was damp

with bloody sweat. At Bethlehem Christ represented God in humanity ; in Gethsemane Christ represented humanity in God. Henceforth there was nothing left but to die of anguish ; the torture of the cross but hastened an inevitable end. Christ did not die of His wounds ; His heart was broken. He was killed by the condemnation of humanity. Christ did not suffer in the place of humanity ; it was humanity that suffered in Christ. But if suffering was necessary for Christ, it was not necessary for Jesus.

Christ, head of our race, root and flower of humanity, primitive and final unit of the human species, Christ was one with men ; Christ was identical with the totality of all men, past, present, and future. Jesus, on the contrary, is a distinct personality, an historic personage born on a certain night in a stable, and brought up at Nazareth by Joseph and Mary. If we have suffered in Christ, we have not suffered in Jesus, though truly Jesus died for us, in our place. " The chastisement of our peace was upon

Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Innocent and spotless victim! He gave His life for sinners, and we will sing through eternity, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

## III.

My brothers, while we wait to sing the glory of the Lamb that was slain, let us here on earth long, with St. Paul, after "the fellowship of His sufferings."

There are those who seem to be amazed because the world still resounds with groans and cries. "If Jesus suffered for man," they say, "why does man still suffer?" Alas! they are blind. Their mean souls cannot perceive that if sorrow were refused to man, the expiatory agony of the Saviour would impose upon him the worst of suffering. Can one imagine a mother breaking forth into joy because the fire that burned

her child to death, spared her own life? Do we not know that the worst sorrow for those who love, is to witness suffering that they cannot share? And when the one we love is our victim, when he suffers unjustly through our fault, is there sufficient consolation in the thought that our own health is flourishing? Who are those people who think that they should be spared all suffering because Jesus agonized for them? Cold hearts! Disciples of Caiaphas! They understand his cry, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people." The blood of Christ only serves to water their selfishness, which puts out stronger roots and brings its hateful and nauseous flower to perfection, even at the foot of the cross. What! Jesus suffered! He suffered for me, and suffering does not seem desirable! He suffered in His body, and my body must be spared! I am to be forbidden to know by my own experience anything about His burdens! Why, that is the chief cry of my being in the presence of my bleeding Redeemer!

It is strange that the more exalted mystics were not drawn so far astray as to drive a nail into their hand, that they might better know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.

Truly the sufferings of life are necessary ; they make it possible to bear the thought of the sufferings of Christ.

But if Jesus suffered physically, He suffered morally most of all, and we desire ardently to be united to His moral suffering. Like Him we would see in our suffering the fruit of sin ; for though we know well that Jesus bore the sins of the world, we also know that there are sufferings in our lives that are the immediate result of personal faults ; and even when we cannot see the exact relation between the anguish and the fault, a secret instinct warns us that if we smite our breast, weeping, we are not far from right. Jesus prostrate in Gethsemane does not prevent us from falling on our faces in the dust, and crying, "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I

sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest."

We are conscious in the depths of our hearts that if Jesus suffered to save us, we must suffer to be saved; we feel clearly that if Jesus died by sin and for sin, it was that we might die *to* sin; we understand that if Jesus was crucified, it was that we might be drawn to Him on the cross. And thus we unite our sorrows to those of our Saviour. Day by day we offer unto God our sufferings in the fellowship of Christ, and when the pale terrors of death crowd silently around our hearts, we murmur, "Father, I have sinned against Thee, and am no longer worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants." Ah! what would become of us without our sufferings? We feel that we are sinners, and by the chastisement that fell on Christ we can better understand the need of our own punishment. To accept suffering as a punishment, and not only as a trial, is to acknowledge Christ; it is to acquiesce in

His work, to walk with Him voluntarily in the sorrows that He took upon Himself for our redemption. "That which is behind in the afflictions of Christ," wrote St. Paul, "I fill up in my flesh."

Yes, we must suffer, that the sufferings of Christ may be useful to us—that they may "sanctify" us. Does this mean that this wholesome and legitimate personal expiation for our sins may throw in the background the great expiatory Sacrifice that was offered once for all? Far from that; the more we believe in the necessity of our punishment, the more we realize the depth of our sin. I suffer; have I suffered enough? I weep; ought I not to bleed? I have accepted grief; ought I not to impose it upon myself? From thence come macerations and voluntary torture. But this is not all. We are not only guilty of the sins that we have deliberately committed, for there are in us two beings, the man and the individual. The individual comes into the world at a certain date; he has a name of his own; he appears for the

first time, and looks astonished at the stars. But man in us is as old as humanity, and through the eyes of Adam he has already seen the heavens.

As individuals, we correspond in the Saviour to the name of Jesus, and as men, to the name of Christ. Now, my brothers, in exactly the same measure that we partake of humanity, we partake of its sins. It is in vain that we say that this sin need not disturb us, since it is not ours; the truth refutes this reasoning; there are hours of inward silence and revelation, when we feel the sin of the world weighing upon us, when the holiest bows his head under the knowledge of his impurity, humiliated by the stern conviction that he is a sinner because he is a man. What folly, then, to fancy that he could redeem this great collective crime by his own personal sufferings! So, then, whether the question concerns our personal sins, or the sin that is in us, the evil that we have done, or the general evil in which we are born, the faults for which we reproach



ourselves, or the fault that we inherit, in order to find peace of conscience we have no sufficient expiation in our power. It is then, O companions in sorrow, that the cross shines through our darkness. It is then that we find inexpressible comfort in looking unto Him who died in our place. Then we cry out, "I understand! I understand!" O my God, thrice-holy God, just God, my feeble will cannot offer Thee a true hatred of sin; but in Jesus Christ I offer it to Thee. In Him I was in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. There He abhorred and condemned sin; He drank of the cup of Thy anger. O my God! He did what I cannot do, what I fain would do. His work is mine. I offer it to Thee as mine. I love His humiliation, for I thirst to humiliate myself before Thee. I love His tears, I love His ignominy, I love His wounds, for it is my own unworthiness that I taste in His shame; it is my own punishment that I accept in His sufferings. O my God! Jesus acquiesced in the judgment pronounced against humanity, entire

in Christ, and I, weak, powerless, miserable, agree with this agreement, with its infinite peace and healing.

My brothers, do you know what it is to feel yourself insufficient to your own desires, powerless to express the deepest aspirations of your souls? Do you comprehend the sublime anguish of a human creature struggling in vain to give a voice to thoughts that are ineffable?

What artist has not groaned before an ideal which he dimly sees, but cannot prison in a body of its own? When a mother bends above the cradle or the coffin of her child, can she find words for her bliss or her anguish? Her whole heart goes forth in sighs that cannot be uttered. Any infirmity which hinders us from saying what we wish, is a source of keen suffering. In such solemn moments, when we are cruelly conscious of our poverty and our hopeless weakness, sometimes nature itself comes to the help of our impotence. Do you remember the day when you went to weep in the cemetery? The wind wailed

round the tombs; it shook the funeral wreaths and broke down the flowering shrubs. Flat on the earth, each little tuft of grass seemed to be trampled under the feet of an invisible monster. The naked trees bent above you, writhing in silent agony, their noble heads shrinking under the blows of the hurricane, like a horse struck cruelly with a whip. The black clouds sped away over the gray vastness, like a frightened flock chased by a wild beast. In this universal desolation did not you recognize your own despair? did you not cry to the tempest, "I thank thee"? It is thus that every human heart, as soon as it begins to mourn for its sins, welcomes the cross of Christ, and cries, "I thank Thee, O Christ!" Thus our own sufferings are necessary, that we may understand the necessity of those of Christ.

Must needs! "Christ must needs have suffered." We, too, must of necessity suffer. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His

ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

## FRIDAY.

### GLORIOUS SUFFERING.

“Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.”—HEB. I. XII. 2.

THE Man of Sorrows is at the same time the light of the world. If His name calls forth the idea of infinite suffering, it also calls forth the idea of infinite joy. The gospel is the story of a fatal martyrdom, and yet little children are rocked to sleep by it on their mothers' knees. The shameful instrument of an evil and unjust execution, pours peace into the hearts of dying men. The same cross that drove Judas to despair, placed on his tomb would have spoken of hope; and if the agony of the Saviour can disturb the stupid and culpable beatitude in which the egoist has lulled

himself to sleep, it can also draw to itself, from the ends of the earth, all those who seek rest, consolation, and happiness. Like a silver bell through the night, so joy resounds unceasingly in the tragic life of Jesus Christ. First it is the shining choir of angels, who sing the joy of salvation in the illuminated plains of Bethlehem, and, transported with gladness, celebrate the "great joy which shall be to all mankind." Then come the shepherds glorifying God, the aged Simeon giving thanks, Anna the prophetess, who blesses the Lord, and the wise men also, who "rejoiced with exceeding great joy" when the ray of a certain star crowned with light the forehead of the little new-born King. Let us follow Jesus in His ministry. Abraham, the first of the prophets, "rejoiced to see the day of Christ;" John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, could not have enough of the presence of Christ. He compares himself to the "friend of the Bridegroom, who rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice"; and he adds that "this

my joy therefore is fulfilled." Jesus "went from place to place doing good"; that is, He left the mark of His blessed presence as He passed. Then there came an hour when the multitude, mad with joy, cast their garments before Him, disturbing a whole city with the noise of their hosannas. The sermons of Jesus begin with the word "blessed": "Blessed are they that mourn;" and they end with the word "joy": "These things have I spoken unto you, . . . that your joy may be fulfilled. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy, . . . and your joy no one taketh away from you." And if the evangelist shows us Jesus "rejoicing in spirit" in the plenitude of His activity, at the moment when His ministry reached its height, we hear Jesus again speaking of His joy on "the same night when He was delivered." Before He went out to go to Gethsemane, He lifted up His eyes unto heaven and said, "Father, I come to Thee, . . . that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves." The words of the sacred book from which we draw the sub-

ject of our meditation to-day are therefore in perfect harmony with the spirit of the Gospels: "Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross." Ah! weigh these words well. Jesus did not love suffering for itself. He loved it for its fruits. Jesus, bearing His cross, dragged Himself toward joy; Jesus, expiring, entered into joy. And what joy, my brothers? The joy of having saved the world; the joy that Jesus described in these words: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." Truly if the voice trembles in speaking of the agony of the Saviour, it also trembles as it speaks of His joy. A unique joy! A joy unlimited and fathomless! An eternal joy! Thanks be to God, this joy is really His, and His alone, for He alone is worthy of it; He alone is capable of it. The joy of having given everything that He might deliver us all; the joy of having seen our misery and having abolished it; the joy of having looked at our graveyards and destroyed death; the joy of having sounded the



depths of sin, its shames and its blasphemies, its terrors, its disgusts, and its crimes, and having annihilated it; the joy of having sought the wandering sheep, and bringing it in upon His shoulder; the joy of having gained the love of the prodigal, and leading him to his Father's house; the joy of pity; the joy of sacrifice; the joy of redemptive suffering; the joy of a free salvation offered without conditions, without limit, without hesitation; the joy of hearing, some day, you and me crying with a loud voice, with the great multitude of the redeemed, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. For Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

## II.

Now we also, my brothers, have the right to a joy like this. We have the right to suffer for others. In the fellowship of

Jesus Christ living in us, we have the right to collaborate freely through suffering in the redemption of the world.

And, first, is it not true that we have the right to love all those around us? We have the right to place the aureole of our tenderness and veneration on the white hair of our mother. We have the right to bend over the astonished gaze of our little child with delight and awe. And when our country, in some hour of trial, attracts toward it the admiration and sympathy of the world, we have the right to weep for gladness.

And every morning, at our awakening, we have the right to feel our heart swell with an immense enthusiasm for all who bear the name of man; we have the right to accept it each day as a royal privilege, an un hoped-for opportunity, that we may join ourselves once more to the great procession of humanity on its pilgrimage. For the voyage is long; there are pilgrims who will fall exhausted; and who knows if God may not give to us the honor to be a help

to one of these weary ones? Ah! we have the right to love each man. We have the right to love the crowds. We have the right to look with solicitude at all the faces, blooming or faded, pure or impure, vulgar or intellectual, beautiful or ugly, that pass and re-pass in the noisy city streets. Our hearts have a right to rush out toward these unknown people, crying, "O brothers, who are you? Where do you come from? Where are you going? Have you had anything to eat to-day?" "Why is your coat torn? Poor old man, have you no one to mend your clothes?" "Young man, what are you reading?" "Young girl, who is that with you?" "You people who laugh or weep, do you know how to pray? Do you know how to die?" "O brothers, if you only knew the gift of God! Brothers, dear brothers, do you love your best Friend? Do you love Jesus Christ?" Our hearts have a right to speak thus. And at nightfall we have the right to follow the last ray of light into those abodes of misery which it seems to dwell on piti-

fully and to leave with regret. For night is not always given to sleep; in dungeons remorse keeps vigil; in madhouses terror fills the silence with strange rumors; in the hospital the sick man groans; and the dying, hidden in their houses, watched over by affection and science, see the specter of Death rise softly by their bed-sides, and softly lay his inflexible and icy hand on their hearts. We have the right, as darkness falls upon the earth, to draw all these griefs into the circle of our sympathies; and our hearts also have the right to hasten in pursuit of the setting sun, to visit with it those vast continents where the dawn appears while in Europe the stars are shining. There by the growing light we see the melancholy crowd of heathen awake under the novel foliage and unknown paths. They are adorned as for a fête; when the soul has no food, the eyes must be regaled; and the changing colors of this motley crowd of Chinese and Hindus speak of sadness and not of joy. Do you see these multitudes? They crowd

the streets and scatter about the forests. They have old people among them, and children. The little negroes run to the spring under the palm-trees, laughing to see the print of their feet in the sand. What fate is in store for them? Will the iron collar of the slave-hunter imprison those woolly heads some day? Will their blood redden the foaming jaws of a lion? Will they be buried alive, in spite of their cries, to propitiate some unclean divinity? Or will they be extinguished in old age, indifferent as the beasts, without fear and without hope, hardened by a whole life of selfishness, ignorant of even the name of Christ? We have the right to love them, these poor human creatures, whose graves are counted every year by thousands and millions. They do not know us, we shall never see them; but we have the right to enter their daily sufferings on the list of our own cares. All humanity belongs to us; we have the right to inwrap it in our love; and if our solicitude goes to the end of the earth to allay some grief or to share

some trial, no one is authorized to tell us that we are beyond our rights, that we must halt. No; if Jehovah has put a limit to the everlasting efforts of the rising tide, our heavenly Father has imposed no limit on the love of every man for men. And by whatever name love, true love, calls itself at first—"ties of blood," "the voice of nature"—if it be true love, it soon becomes compassion, if, indeed, it is not born of pity. And if it be true pity, it is suffering, and this suffering is redemptive. It desires to destroy evil, and to a great extent it obtains its desire; for to love those who weep, to love those who doubt, to love those who blaspheme, is not that to take away half the burden under which these unhappy ones are bowing?

And more than this, love does not content itself with the affirmation of this generous sympathy. Love does not only wish to suffer with those who suffer; it wishes to suffer in their place. "Let my tears flow, if thine are only dried," is the true cry of love. Love sighs to give its lungs to the dying

man, the grace of its own loveliness to her from whom people turn away their eyes, its only son to the desolate mother, the joy of the gospel to souls that know it not, heaven for hell. St. Paul declared: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren." When love has come to that, there is only one resource, and that is intercession; the silent struggle in the darkness for those who would mock at our prayers if they suspected them, or who would perhaps be irritated by them; the stubborn combat of a love that employs its strongest weapons and will conquer or die. Intercession! supreme resource of a love that immolates itself, and only regrets that there are no more sacrifices that it can make. Then on its knees it agonizes for those who seem about to escape it, and for them it transforms its oratory into a Gethsemane. It casts into the arms of God, "the Father of mercy," those who live around it, perhaps under the same roof, and yet who are separated from it day and night by invisible barriers. Neither does

he who loves and intercedes forget those divided from him by the mountains, the deserts, or the ocean; for the more he prays for those who are dear to him, the more he sees that all human beings are embraced in his love.

Foreign nations, the smallest colonies and the most powerful empires, meet in the prayers of love before they all appear together before the throne of God. But love goes still further; it triumphs over greater separations; "love is stronger than death." O love, answer! when thou hast suffered *with* others, hast thou participated in redemptive suffering? Not so; but in the joy of the Redeemer. When thou hast suffered *in the place* of others, was it redemptive suffering that thou didst share? Not so; but in the joy of the Redeemer. When thou hast wept, groaned, agonized on thy knees, when thou hast interceded for men, hast thou participated in redemptive suffering? No, no; all suffering was swallowed up in the joy of the Redeemer.



But this is not all. Other sorrows are granted us ; other sources of joy may spring up beneath our steps. If it is joy to suffer for the sake of man, is it not joy to suffer for the sake of Jesus? To suffer *as a Christian* is to suffer for the cause that Christ defended ; it is to suffer in the spirit of Jesus, to suffer for the same reasons and through the same enemies ; it is to suffer a redemptive suffering. We are all called to taste this suffering. We learned just now that one must suffer *to be able* to save. Learn still further that one must suffer *because* one wishes to save. When a Christian manifests an intention to devote his life to the salvation of the world, the intention alone excites its wrath. It cries out against the extravagance, the fanaticism, the folly of such an idea.

Jesus often heard such outcries ; but if the Son of God had occupied Himself about His own affairs, He would have stayed in heaven and left us here on earth, despairing. But Jesus pursued His holy mission, calm, steadfast, always loving ; He never

paused for reproaches that might have been exasperating in their profound stupidity. They crucified Him in order to punish Him for His desire to save mankind, and this very punishment saved His enemies. Our Lord said, "Every disciple that is perfect is as his master." Therefore he is not a perfect disciple who does not meet the same criticisms, the same anger, and who does not expose himself to the same glorious reproach that he has stepped forth out of the conventionalities of the world.

Do not let these things astonish thee, O Christian. They are thy lot; they are the password of those who are animated with the spirit of Christ. The gardener who destroys a wasp's nest expects to see the wasps swarming furiously about him; their anger does not disturb him; he continues quietly to the end the work of destruction. For the love of thy blessed Master, walk faithfully in His beloved footsteps. Do not cease to rebuke the violent for their violence, the timid for their cowardice,

skeptics for their credulity, believers for their incredulity. Speak, march, fight. Dost thou not know that the darkness hates the light? "Why did Cain slay his brother? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Suffer! Jesus predicted suffering for His servants. Suffer! Jesus promised suffering to His followers. Suffer! Jesus wishes to suffer in the person of His servants. Suffer! And if, in the heat of the battle, some one says to you, "I pity you," answer him, triumphing with the apostolic church, "I rather glory in my infirmities. . . . I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. I count it all joy, for unto me it is given not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake." And then, O Christian, thou wilt sing together with the church of the nineteenth century this hymn in His praise, which the church of the future will sing at the foot of Golgotha:

"O King of Glory and Man of Sorrows,  
whoever has loved Thee has suffered; who-

ever loves Thee consents to suffer—he has vowed himself to glory and to grief.

“All those who have loved Thee have suffered; but all those who have suffered for Thee have only loved Thee more and more. Sorrow binds us to Thee as joy binds us to the world.

“Sorrow intoxicates, as with some generous wine, those whom Thou biddest to Thy mysterious banquet, and presses out of our broken hearts hymns of adoration and love.”

Who dares to say, my brothers, that the redemptive joy of Christ is a vain word for man? Unite yourselves as Christians, frankly, publicly, to His redemptive sufferings, and you will hear in your hearts the first words of this song.

And now I will speak to those who are weak. Thus far I have spoken to the strong, to those who suffer voluntarily, to those to whom sorrow is a badge of nobility, an unmistakable mark of greatness, a real diadem. If they have been wounded,

it was in the thick of the battle, under the eyes of the glorious Captain who leads them to victory, to the sound of the trumpets that announce the speedy coming of the Lord. But there are others who suffer in obscurity, far from those who fight; they did not anticipate their ills; trial has crushed them. Their hearts have been torn by grief, their bodies have been broken by sickness. Now they lie out of sight, wounded, powerless, hopeless. Those, above all, are worthy of pity who have fallen alive into that grip of physical anguish which only death will loosen. Always in the same attitude, in the same corner of the same room, they are the real exiles from human society; their immobility deprives them of those prerogatives of the animal race which distinguish it from the vegetable world; they retain only the privilege of suffering. Their languid eyes droop in the day, but at night they open widely, large with fever. Their affliction is incommunicable; no one can understand their agony. They are cared for tenderly, but

no one understands the nature of this suffering. In their misery they murmur, "I suffer;" but there is no common measure for suffering, and no one exactly seizes the sense of these two words. The voice which answers, "Ah! I understand," is not altered by the same torture, and the hand that smooths their brow only arouses new anguish. We need the pierced hand of the Crucified One. Christ alone can speak peace to their despair. He says to them, "Take courage; I need you also in order to finish the conquest of the world. If you will unite your sufferings to Mine, they also will acquire a redemptive character, and you will know with Me something of My joy." Now it is perfectly true, my brothers, that physical sufferings, borne in the spirit of Christ, glorify God in a special manner and draw souls to the cross. Listen to the words of a dying Christian to those who surrounded his bed: "There are moments in which I groan and weep more than I pray. But understand well how much sweetness I find in the thought that

I am afflicted for your good; because nothing else could bring my sufferings near to those of my Saviour. Jesus suffered in order to save men, and it is well that I should suffer that I may do them some good. Let all those who suffer strive to enter fully into the love of Christ, so that sorrow may be like a cross planted on the earth, in whose shadow those who are near it may take refuge. Let us rejoice, and assure ourselves that there is no sorrow that cannot be borne peacefully and happily. O marvelous grace of God! O power of the gospel! O sting of death! O immovable steadfastness of grace!"

It is in this way that redemptive joy descends into the hearts of those who unite themselves to the redemptive sorrows of Christ. But who knows, my brothers? Because of the close solidarity that binds all men to one another, sufferings endured in the spirit of the Saviour may perhaps bless even those who have not witnessed them, perhaps even those who have passed away without having heard of them. If

each man who sins lowers the general level of humanity, each man who enters into communion with Christ raises it. The redemptive virtue of the cross descends upon the world from all the Calvarys where Christ suffers in the person of some human being. In every place where a suffering creature can cry with sincerity, "That which is behind in the afflictions of Christ I fill up in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church," there also reappears the redemptive efficacy of the redemptive sacrifice. Even if it is true that we often suffer by our own fault, and have only our own selves to blame for many of our sorrows, are there not certain existences that seem to be aimlessly laid waste by some blind and brutal power? They make us think of beautiful golden harvests ruined by the runaway horse in one sunny day. In his wild course he has trampled and broken the ripe corn; one is thankful if his iron hoof spares the child asleep among the flowers. In this earth the purest brows are often marked by the most



profound scars. When we see a face that makes us think of Christ, we may be sure that it bears the marks of the hands that smote Him. There are eyes that are consumed with weeping, there are lips white with physical suffering, the sight of which would arouse in our hearts a feeling of revolt if we did not know that these unmerited tortures were a gift to the whole human race, from those who suffer them, for the sake of Christ.

Ah! this is an immense consolation for those who suffer in their flesh, with a kind of suffering that is the least noble in appearance, the least voluntary, the least understood. There is a sort of splendor, a strength of resurrection, for the fever-stricken, for consumptives, and for those who feel darkness descending upon their weakening intelligence. The weaker they grow, the more they fall into ruin, the more they share the pain of the dying Saviour. If they suffer looking to His cross, loving all mankind as brothers, an inward voice will say to them, "Well done, good and

faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord." And immediately they will see through the shadows of their agony the shining of the star of redemptive joy.

My beloved friends, do you understand?

Know then that suffering can contribute to the salvation of the world.

To love is to suffer.

To be a Christian is to suffer.

To suffer is to suffer.

Redemptive joy is thus within your reach. For who among you does not love? Who among you does not wish to become a Christian? Who among you will not suffer?

Then pluck out of suffering the glory that is shut up in it; and may it be said of each one of you, "Because of the joy set before him, he endured the cross."

## SATURDAY.

### MYSTERIOUS SUFFERING.

“ Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death.”—  
HEB. V. 7.

#### I.

WHEN the Reformation was introduced into France, a young man named Jean Leclerc was arrested at Meaux, in 1528, condemned for the crime of heresy, cruelly beaten twice in succession, and finally publicly marked on the forehead with a red-hot iron.

At the moment when the executioner inflicted this disgrace upon him, while the flesh smoked and the hands of the sufferer contracted with anguish, a voice exclaimed from the midst of the crowd, “ Live Jesus Christ and His tokens.” Who cried out

thus? The mother of the boy they tortured! Jesus Christ Himself does not seem to have known this austere and noble gladness, which triumphs over suffering in the name of Jesus Christ. The Master had said, "He that believeth in Me shall do the works that I do, and greater works shall he do."

Did He contemplate in advance the shining troop of martyrs? Did He hear their hymns of victory? Did He see their failing arms raised toward the "incorruptible crown of glory"? And did He dwell by contrast on Himself and that anticipated agony on Olivet? Behold Him there, my brothers! Is it thus that heroes die? One hardly sees Him through the darkness. "He fell on the ground and prayed." Why did the angels sing His praises? He whose birth they celebrated, lies prostrate; His heart-breaking groans rise toward the silent depths of the sky. "With strong crying and tears He offered up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death."

How His voice is changed! It is altered by "sorrow and heaviness." A few hours before He had said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled." But as He climbed the hill of Gethsemane He told them that His soul was "exceeding sorrowful unto death." Prostrate in the darkness He struggles: "Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done." Being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done." And He prayed the third time, saying the same words. And the disciples slept under the sparkling unanswering heavens; and the scared night-bird, flapping its heavy wings, is the only living creature who hears the Christ.

The silence of God in Gethsemane oppresses us; but the prayer of the Saviour bewilders us still more. What! Jesus prayed that He might be delivered from death! But had He not declared in the past that the Son of man was come to "give His life

a ransom for sinners"? What! Jesus said, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," opposing the will of the Son to the will of the Father, which He thus made the true cause of the expiatory sacrifice! But, before this, had not the Son said, "For this does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life. . . . No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself"? What is this confusion that has fallen on the spirit of the Redeemer? With what hesitations is He wrestling? Is the struggle with doubt still more cruel than the temptation? What do these words mean, "If it be possible"? Christ does not know, then, what is possible and what is not, what is necessary and what is not? Has He forgotten His own assertion, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up"? "If it be possible"! For us who bend over these abysses the *if* of Gethsemane is as terrible as the *why* of Golgotha: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

In fact, how can we escape the conclusion that is forced upon us? What can

we do but confess, with bent head and in the dust, our hearts swelling with wonder and amazement, that, in these last hours of His life, if Jesus suffered without being understood, He also suffered without understanding? From abandonment to abandonment, from solitude to solitude, from darkness to darkness, He allowed Himself to be led, step by step, to the fatal end; and if He resembled the sheep trembling before the shearer, it was not only because it was dumb, but because its eyes, full of questions about its fate, implore, like His, in vain an answer.

Let us follow Jesus, my brothers, in this utter helplessness, in the midst of an ever-increasing isolation. Let us observe His unnoticed looks, His vain requests, His unanswered prayers. Let us watch Him descend hour by hour into the fathomless darkness of an unexplored mystery, into those abysses of silence, faced for the first time by a human soul, and whose terrors no other soul has ever endured. Let us enter with Jesus into His abandonment, so

complete, so unique, so ineffable, that in it, He expired suddenly, as a flame extinguished for want of air. Then we shall discover in the sufferings of the Saviour undreamed-of riches; we shall discover that His sorrows are for us, even in those hours when we no longer see anything, when we no longer know anything; in those hours of absolute emptiness and total darkness; in those moments of intense and general crisis, when doubt makes night dark around us and within us, when our spirit seems to become a material thing, when we give ourselves up to strange misery, like a waif of the ocean, like a stranded vessel rising and falling at the will of the waves.

## II.

For trial, in despite of everything that can be said in explanation or apology, or even in consolation, remains an unbroken mystery. Crushed under a burden which grows heavier day by day, even when hope is offered us we have no longer strength to



grasp it. We are like travelers lost in the fog, so stiffened by the cold that we are not able to stretch out a hand to receive the guiding light. All the energies of our being are gathered up in the present instant, gathered together in one painful and monotonous instant; they are exhausted in this sullen struggle against an enemy who never leaves us, watching by our bedside and seizing us again at dawn.

Go talk to others of redemptive joy! As for me, I can barely endure my life. Like the prophet Elijah, who, after a day's journey into the desert, sat down under a juniper-tree and asked for death, I, too, when the night returns, when my day's work is done, cry out, "It is enough; O God, take my life."

Does it follow that he who speaks thus is a reprobate? Are the cries, the tears, the unanswered questions that were permitted to the Christ, forbidden to the Christian? O you who would comfort us by force, who would dry our tears in spite of us, who would drag from our broken hearts

protestations of peace, tell me, have you never suffered in the person of those who suffer? Ah! to suffer alone is terrible; but to see others suffer! To see your mother or your child suffer! How can *we* be consoled when they are not? And when they are comforted, when we see them made holy, but all laid waste by sorrow, how can we console ourselves with such consolation? They no longer weep, but they have wept. How can we console ourselves when their sufferings seem unjust, when we know that they are possessing themselves in the thought that they are suffering for us?

And if, on the contrary, their sufferings are deserved, if they are tormented by the consequences of their sins, if one hears the blow of the scourge in the midst of their groans, if the cursed name of their iniquity is graven in letters of blood in their very flesh, how then can we console ourselves? How can we console ourselves when they have disappeared unconsoled? How can we console ourselves when, on the shore,

dumb with tenderness and anguish, we stretch out our arms to those who are going away from us; when they turn away their heads toward the dark flood, and their pale faces vanish forever? Oh, can we console ourselves over our hopeless ones?

Console ourselves! Who would dare to do such a thing? That would be to console ourselves for sin; for the problem of suffering is only the problem of sin. You say suffering is good for us because it is a warning; but a warning supposes a peril, and how will you explain this peril? You say that suffering is a remedy; but a remedy supposes a malady. Suffering is a chastisement; but a chastisement supposes a fault. It is true that, in a world plunged in disorder, suffering is inevitable, is useful, is necessary; but what do you make of this disorder in which the world is plunged? Will you bring to us this monster decked with garlands of flowers? Away! all the flowers in the world could not hide it. Evil! From whence comes

evil? This is the problem that, like an ancient rock, emerges obstinately from the restless ocean of all our explanations. All the intuitions of poets, all the meditations of philosophers, all the assertions of theologians, all, all break themselves against this rock. Whence comes evil?

### III.

Mystery! mystery!

Like the questions of the Christ in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, all these questions remain unanswered. He who attempts to answer them must soon "put his hand on his mouth, and his mouth in the dust." Can we chase away the darkness by saying that the sun is shining? When the night comes, let us fall on our knees in the darkness, searching about in it for the cross of Christ, for it is there. When there is nothing else, the cross is there. When we are forsaken by the world which has deceived us, abandoned by God who speaks no more to us, the cross is

there. When we can think no longer, when we can no longer pray, it is there. It is there when we let ourselves fall sullenly into the gulf of the unknown. It is there, it is always there! Image of all the loneliness, symbol of all the desolation, refuge of all the despair of the world, it remains the supreme asylum for those who doubt, without even knowing that they doubt, for those who no longer understand anything about their destiny, their own hearts, life, death, heaven, all the mystery of the world.

Yes, this gloomy oppression, this bitter discouragement, this weight of vague melancholy, this affliction without shape or name, these sighs, these anxieties, these strange terrors, this incurable disgust for existence, take them, O unhappy victims, take them to the foot of the cross. There it is darker still. You can weep there at your ease, and wring your hands unseen. Stay there a long time. Little by little the figure of the Saviour will grow visible through the shadows. First you will see

His drooping body, then you will distinguish His wounds, at last you will meet His look, the look of the forsaken Lord. Then a new and irresistible emotion will take possession of your soul. In that single ray, piercing your darkness, an unknown life will spring up. Without knowing why you change, nor how this miraculous transformation operates, you will feel that you enter without a struggle into the blessed crisis of the transfiguration, and you will perceive suddenly that your mute stupefaction has become adoration. You will have found God again; and though what was incomprehensible to you is no clearer, you will find an indescribable relief; you will bow your head, silent, docile, murmuring in communion with the Son, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

If we could understand suffering, there might be place in our hearts for submission, for hope, for thanksgiving; but there would be no place for adoration. Adoration is the triumph of faith. Adoration consists in believing, praying, living in despite of

all things; it is to make a step into the void and say, "There is a rock there." It is to stretch a hand into the darkness and say, "There is a hand there, waiting for mine." The heroic formula of adoration is in these four words: *I believe in God*; for "God is the sovereign decision of the soul." Adoration is not the abdication of reason before mystery; it is the conquest of mystery by the will, by humility, by the earnest contemplation of Jesus Christ crucified. Adoration is the victory of a soul which believes that the salvation of the world was consummated through infirmity, through ignominy, through death. It believes that He who agonized on Golgotha was the Son of God; it believes that He, forsaken on His gibbet, was "the Desire of the nations"; it believes that rough and bloody tree to be the center of the universe; it believes that hour of anguish and darkness to be the decisive hour of history; it believes that the masterpiece of the love of God shone out in the abandonment of the Holy and the Just One. The



soul believes it without understanding, crying out, "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief." But in believing, it penetrates into the secrets of the Most High; it deciphers a few lines in the great book of the destinies of our race; it learns the true meaning of the words *defeat* and *misfortune*; it feels confusedly that in the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit, *death* signifies *life*, and *suffering*, *redemption*.

Then this soul which knows nothing yet, and which already knows all things, finds an indescribable peace in adoration; it contemplates its own baseness and God's greatness, its own poverty and the riches of God; it blesses and exalts His holy and mysterious will, for the honor of serving God surpasses the glory of understanding Him.

Do not talk to that soul of proofs, of answers, of deliverances. It is precisely in the absence of proofs that adoration triumphs. The soul that adores persists in prayer when prayer seems vain; "against hope it believes in hope." Clear proof



would slay it; and when anguish wrings from it the cry of despair, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" its supreme ambition is to add directly, notwithstanding the implacable silence of the shut heavens, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

Ah! on this poor earth where Jesus died for men I did not know how to show my love for Him, to suffer in communion with Him, "to turn my sorrows into a cross." Just so far as I have misunderstood the holy purpose of suffering, I have rendered the redemptive sacrifice of no avail. My trials have weakened my faith, they have lessened the faith of my brothers, instead of deepening our common enthusiasm for Him who died on Calvary. Because of my griefs, I have doubted Providence and disdained life; I have declared that my burden was heavier than I could bear. I have misunderstood the usefulness, the necessity, the glory of sorrow; and I have not been able to discern in the very mystery of sorrow the only foothold for a per-

fect adoration. O Christ, pardon me! On this little planet where Thou didst come down to give us Thy blood, I have not even consecrated to Thee my tears. O regrets! O wasted treasures! O irreparable past! Is this, my brothers, the awakening we are preparing for ourselves in glory?

Ah! let us arise out of sleep while it is yet time; let us leave our barren sighs, our fruitless sorrows, our joyless afflictions; "let us go forth therefore unto Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."







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